

Appln. No. 10/027,024
Amdt. Dated September 8, 2003
Reply to Office Action of May 7, 2003

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 3 of this paper.

Remarks begin on page 7 of this paper.

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of producing a printing plate comprising providing a thermal transfer film carrying a thermal transfer material in proximity to a surface of a printing plate carrier,

selectively ablating said thermal transfer material using a laser image-setting unit to selectively apply ~~structure information~~ said thermal transfer material directly to the surface of said printing plate carrier, thereby forming a mask directly on said printing plate carrier, ~~and forming said mask defining~~ image points and non-image points directly on said printing plate carrier by covering only one of said image points and said non-image points on said carrier, and using said mask ~~in order~~ to produce a printing plate.

Claim 2 (currently amended): A method as in claim 1 wherein said ~~printing plate~~ is mask is used to produce a gravure printing plate.

Claim 3 (currently amended): A method as in claim 2 wherein said mask is an etching mask which is applied to the surface of the printing plate carrier so that it covers said non-image points, said method further comprising etching gravure printing cells by applying acid where said thermal transfer material has not been ~~ablated~~ applied to said surface of said carrier.

Claim 4 (currently amended): A method as in claim 3 wherein said ~~structure~~
~~information is~~ thermal transfer material is selectively applied to a variable area of said surface
with a constant thickness ~~using an autotypical image data process~~ during ablation of said transfer
material using said laser image setting unit.

Claim 5 (currently amended): A method as in claim 1 wherein said ~~printing plate~~
~~is~~ mask is used to produce a flexographic printing plate.

Claim 6 (currently amended): A method as in claim 5 wherein said printing plate
carrier comprises a light sensitive coating which forms said surface, said mask being a copying
mask which is applied to the surface of said carrier, said method ~~further~~ comprising selectively
exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp ~~in order to~~
~~form image points and non-image points on said light sensitive coating.~~

Claim 7 (currently amended): A method as in claim 6 wherein said copying mask
is a positive copying mask, said copying mask covering said image points.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method as in claim 6 wherein said mask is a
negative copying mask, said copying mask covering said non-image points.

Claim 9 (original): A method as in claim 1 wherein said printing plate is a screen-
printing screen.

Claim 10 (original): A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a copying mask.

Claim 11 (currently amended): A method as in claim 10 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a network-like fabric structure which forms said surface, said fabric structure being coated throughout with a light sensitive material, said method comprising applying said copying mask to said fabric structure and exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp ~~in order to form image points and non-image points on said light sensitive coating.~~

Claim 12 (currently amended): A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a positive mask, said copying mask covering said non-image points.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a negative mask, said copying mask covering said image points.

Claim 14 (original): A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a screen-printing mask, said screen-printing screen being produced by electroplating.

Claim 15 (currently amended): A method as in claim 14 wherein said printing plate carrier has a metallic surface, said method comprising

applying said screen-printing mask to the surface of said printing plate carrier, said mask serving as a positive mask which insulates said surface covers said image points, and

~~forming image points and non image points directly on said printing plate carrier~~
by exposing the non-insulated parts of said surface to an electrolyte, thereby depositing metal
where said material is not applied to form said screen printing screen.

Claim 16 (original): A method as in claim 1 wherein said mask is formed in a printing machine, and said printing plate is produced by means of said mask in said printing machine.

Claim 17 (new): A method as in claim 1 wherein said thermal transfer material is a polymer material.